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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS SIXTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Aurora Javate DE DIOS (Philippines)

Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

B. Consideration of reports

4. Third periodic report

Denmark

1. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Denmark (CEDAW/C/DEN/3) at its 328th and 329th meetings, on 24 January 1997.

2. In her introductory statement, the representative noted that the report had been prepared in a participatory way and included the comments of various women's organizations in Denmark. To further strengthen the outreach of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, both the Convention and the report had been translated into Danish and published by women's organizations.

3. The representative pointed out that much had been accomplished in terms of improving the status of women in Denmark, but the success went beyond the provision of legal rights. More importantly, Danish society had also started to change its attitude towards women. An understanding of the concept of gender,

including the roles of both men and women, had gained ground. Denmark had focused its efforts on changing attitudes towards women and gender roles in Danish society. In the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, Denmark had focused on mainstreaming gender issues in all levels of society.

4. The representative informed the Committee about recent efforts to strengthen the institutional framework for the advancement of women that had not been reflected in the report. An ad hoc committee had been established to develop new ideas and strategies to improve national machinery and to consult equality institutions in other countries. Furthermore, the Government of Denmark had increased its support to the Equal Status Council in terms of personnel and funding.

5. The representative highlighted some recent changes in legislation designed further to advance the status of women. For example, Danish counties were now obliged to report back to the national Government on equality issues in employment in their region, and a proposal would be discussed in Parliament concerning women's right to join the army on conditions almost equal to men.

6. The representative described the special efforts undertaken by Denmark to encourage fathers to share parental responsibility for the raising of children. The legal framework provided unmarried couples with the possibility of sharing custody and granted both parents the right to parental leave. The representative also pointed out that those measures had to be accompanied by programmes designed to motivate men to really use the parental leave schemes. Therefore, the Minister of Employment was exploring new models to encourage fathers to make use of their newly acquired rights.

Concluding comments

Introduction

7. The Committee expressed appreciation for the clear and well-organized third periodic report of Denmark, which closely followed the Committee's guidelines.

8. The Committee was pleased to note that the report and Denmark's answers to the questions of the Committee's pre-session working group provided relevant and up-to-date statistics. This allowed the Committee to discern the evolution of conditions in relation to the majority of the articles of the Convention.

9. The Committee also commended the Government of Denmark for including comments of non-governmental organizations in its report, and evaluated this practice as a positive innovation.

Positive aspects

10. Denmark's commitment to high standards of gender equality and its consistent efforts to create an egalitarian society with respect to gender were regarded by the Committee as exemplary.

11. The Committee was aware of the legal measures by Denmark and the statistics on different aspects of gender equality in Denmark reflected constant

improvement over time. In that regard, the institutionalized participation of women's non-governmental organizations in the politics of equality and mainstreaming of gender equality through the creation of Equality Commissions in a majority of Ministries in Denmark were noted as major achievements.

12. The Committee appreciated the Government's holistic approach to the implementation of the Convention and was pleased to note that conscientious efforts were already under way for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

13. The Committee was also pleased to learn that provisions concerning persecution on the basis of gender had been incorporated into the laws on the status of refugees in Denmark.

Principal subjects of concern

14. The Committee noted with concern a tendency to de-emphasize affirmative action politics and to operate with gender-blind criteria, although de facto equality in many aspects of public life was far from being achieved. Academic and research positions, as well as high-level managerial posts in the public and especially in the private sectors, reflect disproportionately low levels of women's participation. In that regard, the Committee noted with special concern such signs of a "backlash" as the removal of quotas by political parties.

15. The absence of special measures and programmes for immigrant and refugee women to enable them to benefit from legal and social services available in Denmark was noted as an area of concern by the Committee.

16. The absence of a specific law on violence against women was noted as a principal deficiency. The Committee was concerned about the real incidence of violence, rape and incest and the absence of specific legislation and/or measures to sensitize the police, the judiciary or the public in general regarding those issues.

17. The Committee noted with concern that stereotypical gender role perceptions continued to exist in society and were related to the perseverance of attitudes and behaviour that kept women away from decision-making positions and men from assuming an equal share of family responsibilities.

18. The fact that women, despite their high level of education, are more seriously affected by unemployment than men was noted with concern by the Committee. The existence of a serious gender-based salary gap, as well as the lack of assessment for equal pay for work of equal value, were also acknowledged as matters of concern.

Suggestions and recommendations

19. Affirmative-action measures should be maintained and strengthened, particularly in the areas of reducing unemployment among women; ensuring that women and men receive equal pay for work of equal value; increasing women's participation in private-sector decision-making; increasing the number of female

university professors and researchers; and encouraging men to devote more time to child care and housework.

20. Each affirmative-action initiative should include quantitative targets, time limits for their achievement, specific measures and sufficient budgetary resources.

21. In particular, more efforts should be made to determine whether trafficking in women and exploitation of prostitution are taking place and whether new communications technologies, especially the Internet, are being used for such purposes.

22. More in-depth research should be conducted on the incidence of various forms of violence against women, especially in more vulnerable groups such as immigrant women, and the findings should be included in the next report.

23. The Government should consider adopting a specific law to combat all forms of violence against women, taking into account General Recommendation No. 19 of the Committee.

24. The "Gender and culture" course, which is currently optional in pre-university curricula, should be made mandatory in secondary education.

25. In accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action, it is recommended that the value of non-remunerated work done by both women and men should be included in national accounts, through satellite accounts.

26. It is recommended that Denmark's development assistance should include among its objectives the implementation (or ratification, where applicable) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the beneficiary countries.

27. Moreover, the Committee asks that the next report include information on:

(a) Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the commitments announced by Denmark at the Fourth World Conference on Women;

(b) The number of women and men who work: (i) part-time; (ii) on a flexible schedule; (iii) outside the workplace, using new technologies;

(c) The steps taken by trade unions and business organizations to implement the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;

(d) The use, in cases of abortion, of the RU-486 pill;

(e) The number of women who use medically assisted reproduction techniques and the number of children adopted;

(f) Disabled women, especially in terms of their access to education and employment.